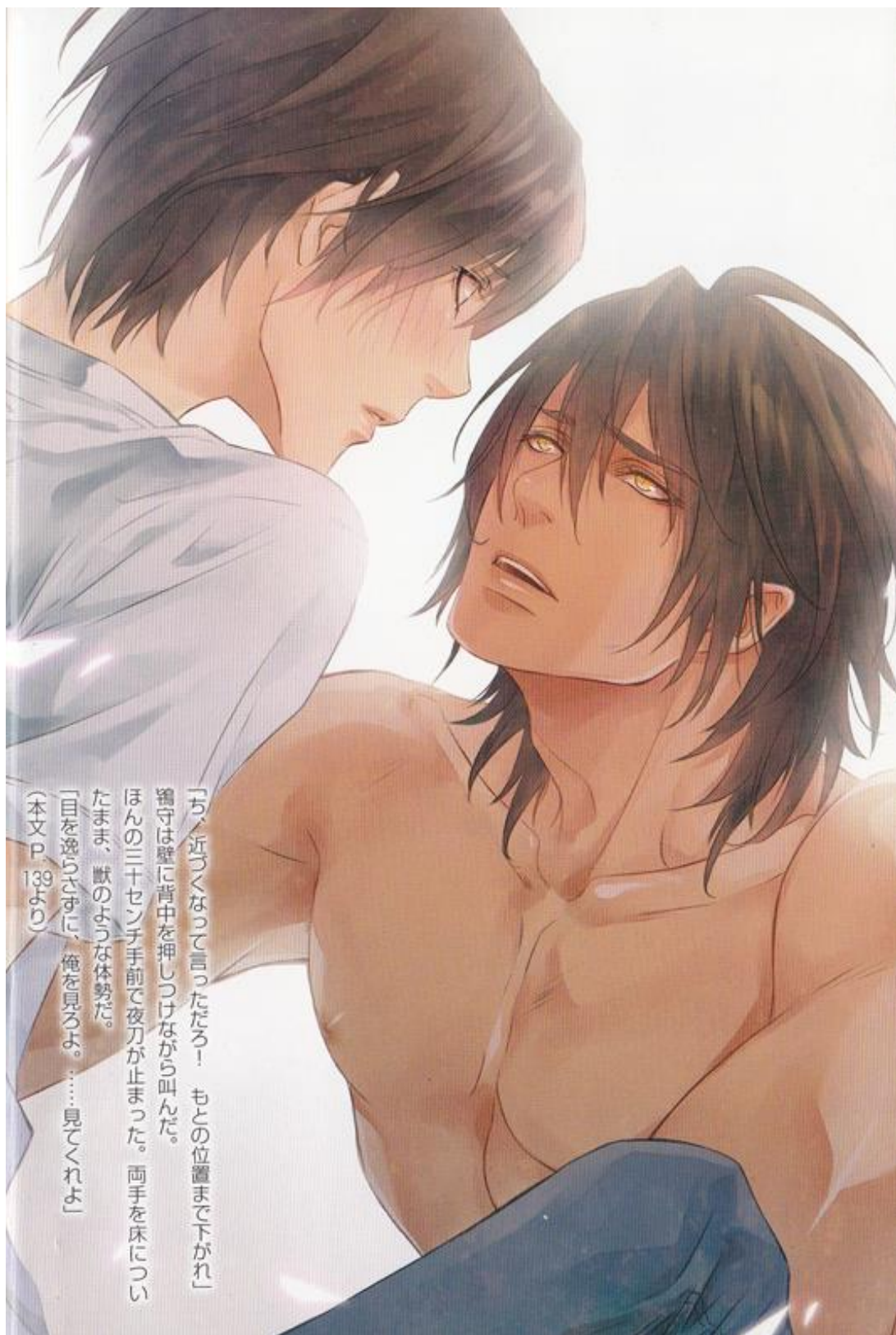






Tokimori &
Yato

「鬼の王と契れ」



「ち／＼近づくなって言っただろ！ もとの位置まで下がれ」
鶴守は壁に背中を押しつけながら叫んだ。
ほんの三十センチ手前で夜刀が止まった。両手を床につい
たまま、獣のような体勢だ。
「目を逸らさずに、俺を見ろよ。……見てくれよ」
(本文P.139より)

Prologue

Yato looked into a certain house's living room from the window. For the first time in ten years, a branch of the Yase family gave birth to a demon master. The Yase family lineage was mixed with demon blood. They were able to see the unusual forms of demons that couldn't be seen by normal human eyes. Every once in a while, a demon master appeared—they exchanged contracts with demons and employed them for use. In the living room of a Japanese style house, buried in a small down-filled futon, slept a baby demon master. Decorating the alcove was a christening scroll with the name "Tokimori" on it. It was an adorable name. The baby sleeping in the futon was surrounded by his parents and grandparents.

"I can't see from here."

Yato muttered to himself, as he passed through the window and wall into the living room. None of the family noticed at all when the 180cm tall Yato had suddenly appeared in the room, crouched down above Tokimori's head, and looked into his face. The baby was fast asleep.

He had never thought of a human as cute before, but this child was different. His soft looking pale peach skin and fluffy hair were unbelievably precious.

“.....Tokimori.”

Yato called his name quietly. As if he had heard his voice, the baby awoke from his slumber. His clear eyes turned toward him. Yato was unable to take his eyes away from him. He felt an intense attraction to him. He was drawn to his indescribable power. He didn't want to leave this child's side for even a moment. He wanted to always be by his side and watch over him. He wanted to protect him from any sort of enemy. He would do anything for this child's sake. That impulse welled up inside him, and filled Yato's entire body. The urge to keep him all to himself was so strong that he wanted to eliminate the parents this baby needed to raise him. Tokimori and Yato were meant to be together. He wouldn't let anyone come between the two of them. If anyone tried, he would eradicate them. Luckily, Yato had the power to do just that.

“Tokimori.”

Yato called to him more clearly. The adults who were unable to see demons ignored him. Only Tokimori turned his attention to Yato. He may not have been able to understand his words, but he could definitely hear Yato's voice.

Feeling good about that, Yato brought his face even closer.

“My cute Tokimori. My demon master. I am Yato. Your one and only demon. Get bigger soon, and make a contract with me.”

Yato suddenly looked towards the window he was originally peeking in from. There were countless large demons of various sizes gathering behind the window glass trying to get a look at Tokimori. The reason they hadn't entered the house yet was because they were afraid of Yato's power.

“Leave!”

When Yato angrily spat out his order, the demons trembled then ran away in a panic.

“Mnah~”

Yato, who had been glaring at the window, was lured by the innocent baby's voice, and returned his gaze to Tokimori. He smiled cheerfully which made Yato smile as well. He had used them menacingly earlier, but he now bared his fangs, that were hard enough to chew through anything, to smile. Instantly, Tokimori's face warped into a grim expression before he burst into tears.

Chapter 1

“Mn.....ngh.”

Feeling kind of good, Tokimori let out a small moan. He knew his eyes were closed, but since his head wasn't clear yet, he thought maybe he was dreaming. However, his dream was attacking him with rather pleasant feelings one after the other. There was something small straddling his body, stroking around his collar bone, kneading his nipples, then moving down to trace his genitals through his underwear.

“Uuwah.....mn.”

When Tokimori twisted his hips, the small thing resisted his movements by smacking his abdomen. It didn't hurt, but the feeling of being smacked also felt real. Tokimori reflexively tensed as that thing slid past the waistband of his underwear. He was unable to stop it from starting to directly touch his penis. When the shaft was rubbed, and the tip poked, his pleasure heightened all at once.

“Ahn, ah.....kh.”

His erection twitched as it pushed up his underwear. The grazing of his shaft, and the stroking of the underside wouldn't stop, but the way he was being touched wasn't enough to lead him to ejaculation, and was extraordinarily frustrating. After a while he couldn't help losing his patience with the thing having its way with his body. Tokimori reached between his legs. Once he did though, the thing that was sitting on top of his stomach, doing whatever it pleased with his penis got in the way.

“Mngh.....”

The stress building up in Tokimori from wanting to cum, but not being able to, and wanting to touch himself, but not being able to made him give into his frustration. He swung his hand hard, knocking the obstacle off of him.

“Wah!”

Tokimori heard a yell that wasn't his own. That voice made his eyelids snap open. He instantly grasped the situation. First of all, he was awake, and wasn't having a dirty dream. That pleasure was all real.

“What are you doing, that hurt!”

When he lifted his head from his pillow, and looked down, the culprit behind those obscene acts was sitting on the bed cross-legged with his arms crossed in a huff.

First, Tokimori was shocked by his own appearance. His comforter had been pulled away, the pajama top he was wearing had been pushed up to his neck, and his pants had been pulled down halfway down his buttocks. The tip of his swollen penis was peeking out from the waistband of his disheveled underwear.

“.....Yato. How many times have I told you to stop assaulting me while I’m asleep?”

Tokimori lifted his body as he forced his genitals back into his underwear, pulled up his pants, and pulled down the sleeves of his shirt. Full of anger that went against his own lethargy, he glared at Yato who had done all that to him when he was half asleep and didn’t notice a thing.

“I wasn’t attacking you. I was just having a taste of you, Tokimori.”

The forty centimeter tall Yato answered boldly. His face looked around fifteen or sixteen years old, black hair surrounded dark skin, and on his naked body was a tiger printed cloth wrapped around his waist. His small form looked exactly like a human, but he clearly wasn’t. Gold, sparkling eyes with pupils that shut vertically like a cat’s, two horns growing from under his black hair, all displayed his true form. Yato was a demon. He was the small demon that made a contract with Tokimori and was employed by him. Tokimori was a demon master.



He was born into the Yase family that had a lineage of demon masters continuously since the Heian period. When he was five, he met the small demon, Yato, and when he was eight made a contract with him to make him his servant. According to Yase family tradition, he had to start his work as a demon master with Yato once he turned fifteen. It had been five and half years since then. Tokimori moved out from his family house that he had lived in ever since he was born with his parents and grandparents on his father's side. He now lived together with Yato in a one room apartment. Since demons can't be seen by normal humans, it looked like he lived alone. Their relationship was like a mutual love between master and servant. The demon master adored his demon servant, and the demon servant loved his demon master. Like a dog that swore his allegiance to him, Yato never left Tokimori's side, and Tokimori never wanted to leave Yato's side. To Tokimori, Yato was his loyal demon servant, but he was also his irreplaceable best friend who raised him since he was young. Because of that, the distinct wall between master and servant crumbled, and the amount of times Yato broke his promises with Tokimori increased. Even though he was prone to spoiling Yato, he needed to put his foot down as his master now. Considering that point, Tokimori crossed his arms in front of his chest and tried to look as serious as possible.

“I told you about touching me, and attacking me without my consent. I don’t want those things done to me. Didn’t I already give you a reward for your work last night?”

“It wasn’t enough. I want to touch you, Tokimori. I want to taste all of your body. When I kiss your lips and skin I feel energized. Because you’re so cute, Tokimori.”

Yato retorted with a face as if nothing had happened.

“.....kh.”

Even though he meant to lecture him, Tokimori lowered his red face. He looked at the bulge between his legs. It was starting to throb with the regret of being unable to achieve its goal. Once it was excited, he was unable to calm his young body. He had never dated anyone, even now as a third year college student. That may have been part of the reason why he was still a virgin. Yato’s urge to monopolize Tokimori was so strong that he wouldn’t allow him to have any lovers. Because of that, even though he was finally able to live alone, he didn’t like Tokimori looking at adult DVDs, or even the non-age restricted weekly publication inserts of gravure idols in swimsuits, and got in the way of him acquiring them. He told him, *only look at me*. Unfortunately, the 40cm tall demon before his eyes couldn’t satisfy his sexual curiosity. Plus, he was male.

Tokimori was his master, so he could give him strict orders that he'd have to follow, but it wasn't like he could just say with a straight and serious face,

"I really want to read some erotic books, and I want to watch sex videos as reference to prepare for when the time comes."

Tokimori felt Yato's longing gaze pierce between his legs.

"Hey, Tokimori. You're hard, so let me lick it. Just a little is fine."

".....no!"

Tokimori yelled with a red face as he kicked Yato off of him, quickly got out of bed and dashed into the bathroom.

"Ah, if you're going to shower then I'll join....."

"I told you entering is forbidden! If you come in I'll ignore you all day today. If you want my company, wait right there."

He warned before shutting the dressing room door. He then locked the door to the bathroom. Even though Yato was small, he possessed strange abilities like going through locked rooms or walls, so he was basically defenseless to him. However, locking the door versus not locking it made Tokimori feel more at ease. Tokimori unintentionally saw himself reflected in the mirror set up on the bathroom wall. His slender, pale body wasn't particularly robust. His soft black hair was disheveled from sleep.

His double-lidded eyes, straight nose, and light pink lips were placed nicely on his small face. He had been told that he had a feminine face, but he didn't look like anyone in particular in his family. When he dropped his gaze, his half erect penis was reflected. There were days where he would wait until his desire died down covered by cold water, but it looked like that would be impossible today. The warm water of the shower came out and Tokimori closed his eyes. He had no interest in masturbating while watching himself aroused in the mirror. He fumbled for his penis then started to rub it quickly. The shame he felt locked up in the bathroom doing this sort of deed first thing in the morning faded as he gave into his heightened pleasure. *Men are simple creatures*, he thought. Tokimori worked the shaft with his left hand, and with the palm of his right hand he stroked around the hole at the tip.

“.....kh.”

The stimulus of that sensitive area sent shivers up his spine as he let out a sigh. In order to keep himself from letting out his voice, he unconsciously clenched his teeth and kept his lips shut out of habit. The warm water flowing from the shower mixed with the slippery pre-cum seeping out from the tip let his hand glide smoothly along the shaft over and over.

Yato was waiting, and he needed to get going to university, so he didn't have time to fully enjoy himself. All he could do was hurry along his climax.

“Hmf.....kh.....”

The sound of the running shower thankfully drowned out his now rough breathing. He stroked the area that felt the best to him that only he could control with just the right amount of pressure. It felt so good that his legs started to shake as he stood on the tiles.

His masturbation was always accompanied with guilt. It gave him the feeling that it was something he shouldn't be doing, or something his parents couldn't find out about. He felt embarrassed pleasuring himself. Even so, he couldn't deny his desire. There was no man who could stop themselves from climaxing.

“.....ha.....mn!”

With a sound he couldn't hold back, Tokimori released his seed. He gripped his twitching penis as he immersed himself in his released pleasure. Once he finished ejaculating, he squeezed out what was left while anything remaining was washed away by the shower. Once his orgasm subsided, Tokimori let out a long sigh. It was an empty deed. After the waves of passion left him, it was time for him to go back to his cool-headed self which made him depressed.

When he wondered if he should keep doing this sort of thing forever, he knew that as a demon master who employed Yato, the answer was obvious, but he didn't want to admit it.

Yato began touching Tokimori's body when he started his job as demon master at fifteen. When a demon servant does a job, the demon master must give him a reward. Most demons who want to amplify their power, want human flesh and blood. Even though they can resist with an amount that won't kill, they can devour a body down to the last drop of blood and bones. That fills them power, and it seems even the smallest demons will grow larger. Demons eat the flesh of humans the same way humans eat the meat of animals. They are neither inhumane nor malevolent about it. Even though he knew that, Tokimori still felt a psychological disgust. Just imagining Yato eating flesh made him want to vomit. As a demon master, he should understand that as a demon, Yato would desire human flesh, but Tokimori personally couldn't stand it. He didn't have the skill or cunning to ignore the divide between humans being humans, and demons being demons.

It was part of the rules that the particulars of the reward were to be discussed and decided on in advance by the demon and demon master before the job. Once it's decided, it's submitted to and prepared by the Yase household.

The human that is chosen as a reward is carefully investigated. Even though it was inevitable that they were being kept alive just to come to harm and become a demon's prey, they didn't need to feel guilty about making a sacrifice out of this human.

Tokimori needed to discuss that with Yato, but he was afraid. He had been together with him since he was five years old, then at least ten more years at that point. He shared his happiness, his sadness, his joy and anger with him. He was afraid of knowing Yato's true nature. He ran away from the topic every day until Yato brought it up the day before their first job.

"I'm fine with kisses from you, Tokimori."

".....What?"

Tokimori stared at Yato without a word before replying. He had been feeling down since he was troubled by this every day, so he couldn't quite understand what he was saying.

"You know, tomorrow is our first job, so we need to decide on my reward ahead of time, right? I want to kiss Tokimori!"

Yato pointed to his own lips as if he were making sure Tokimori knew exactly what a kiss meant. Dumbfounded, Tokimori wondered if he was really okay with that. Yato, who loved physical affection, often caressed Tokimori's face on his forehead and cheeks up until now.

Yato at the time was barely 10cm. He was something he doted on like small animal no bigger than a hamster. Of course, they had touched lips before. It wasn't anything as serious as a kiss, but they had done something similar many times before. He had a feeling that wasn't the reward he wanted specifically for the job.

"I don't mind, but are you all right with that, Yato? Don't demons want to get stronger and bigger? On the other hand, even if you told me you wanted something that would give you power, I'd be pretty troubled by that....."

Yato spoke clearly to Tokimori who was looking away uncomfortably.

"I don't really need power. But if you say you want me to become even more powerful, Tokimori, I'll do my best. Do you want me to get bigger?"

"No. I like you small."

Tokimori replied immediately. The reason he thought it was okay having Yato at his side, and using him as a servant, was because his body was small. Tokimori especially hated large demons. Until Yato appeared before Tokimori, he couldn't help being afraid of the large demons following him around, or of being eaten one day. Those large demons would stare at Tokimori from outside their house, clinging to the window.

He could only remember vague details about their appearances, but he was left with only the memory of two terrifying horns growing out from black hair, and long fangs protruding out from their mouths. Seeing Yato's small form in comparison to the large demons he saw, relieved him from the bottom of his heart.

".....I want to show you my big form too, though."

"Huh, what did you say? I didn't hear you."

"Nothing. All right, I've decided on a kiss with Tokimori. Don't you dare pull away until I'm satisfied. Prepare yourself!"

Yato smiled widely with an imposing stance.

Afterwards, Tokimori who used Yato to safely complete his first job was kissed continuously for 30 minutes as his reward. Feeling like that wasn't enough, Yato not only licked his lips, but all around his face. He sucked and playfully bit him, savoring Tokimori. He didn't dislike it. It was like spoiled little pet fervently begging for affection, he actually thought it was amusing. Surprisingly, the kisses he gave him as a reward made Yato's body grow little by little. Yato told him that whenever he licked Tokimori, he became filled with power. Tokimori had of course wondered if he were secretly sucking out his life force by pretending it was a kiss, but even when Yato sucked at him, his physical condition didn't change. Besides, he loved Tokimori with all of his being, and kept him safe.

He kept Tokimori away from danger almost to the point of being *over* protective. There was no way Yato, who did all of that, would weaken Tokimori in anyway.

Yato had grown around 5cm in a year, and was currently only 40cm. Tokimori accepted his demon servant's change. Come to think of it, since he was with him every day it was difficult to tell how much he changed daily. He was always surprised when he noticed Yato got bigger. If he kept up his current pace, in twenty-six years he would be the same height as Tokimori at 170cm, and then surpass him even further. He didn't like to think too hard about Yato as a large demon. Instead of worrying about the unknown future, he focused on the present.

“.....haa.”

As the shower washed over his head, Tokimori let out a long sigh once again. Ever since Tokimori left his parent's home and started to live alone, Yato began to touch Tokimori at random. When he begged for a kiss that had nothing to do with his rewards, and Tokimori refused, he'd steal one by force. Every day he surprise attacked him with a kiss, and would touch his body while he slept like he did earlier. Whenever he would lick his neck, or tease his nipples it just tickled, but when he started laying his hands on his genitals, there was no way he could be satisfied just by that ticklish feeling.

His body, familiar with self-pleasuring, would get unsurprisingly hard almost to the point of pitiful. Every time it happened, Tokimori would shake off Yato hot on his heels and end up jumping into the bathroom. *Don't do it yourself, I'll finish you off*, Yato would complain noisily, but a 40cm demon wouldn't be able to do that sort of thing, nor did he want him to. No matter how many times Tokimori told him angrily, *don't touch me without my permission*, no matter how many times he pleaded with him, Yato shamelessly would not comply. He'd answer back, *yeah right*. The reason Yato picked up that cheeky behavior was of course Tokimori's own fault. Even though feeling good from being teased by Yato's small doll-like hands was embarrassing, he didn't dislike being touched by him. Because to Tokimori, Yato was cute. At first it felt like a house cat playfully begging for physical contact, but now the contradictive and hypothetical thought of *what if Yato was the same size as me* would float into his head. At his age, with his nonexistent history of lovers, and being absolutely forbidden from getting his hands on any sort of media that would elicit sexual feelings, the reality of the situation was, he had no choice but to let his imagination run wild. He couldn't help but imagine what it was like to normally kiss someone that wasn't a 40cm small demon or how it felt to use both arms to hug someone and have them hug him back.

Even though he was afraid of large demons, his sexual frustration was driving him considerably mad. All he could do to calm himself down was let out a sigh.

“.....Tokimori, Tokimori!”

“Wah!”

Engrossed in his thoughts as he stood under the shower, Tokimori jumped in surprise when he suddenly heard Yato’s voice. Only Yato’s face squeezed through the wall in front of him. It was a ghastly scene like out of a horror movie, but since he was told not to come into the bathroom, Yato was careful not to let his body enter.

“Phone call. It’s the old man from your home.”

“Got it.”

Tokimori nodded, and Yato withdrew his face. He exited the bathroom wiping away his slight dampness, wrapped a towel around his waist and went back to his room. The ringing of his cellphone had already cut off. The light indicating he received a call was blinking. His call history only displayed “home”, but Yato had said it was the old man, so it must have been his grandfather. Yato could sense things unknown to humans.

“What a pain, I’ll have to call him back.”

Tokimori grumbled with a bored voice.

Whether it was his grandfather, father, mother or whoever, it didn't change his irritation. As he glared at the cell phone in his hand, Yato also grumpily sat crossed-legged on the bed and expressed his displeasure.

“That old man probably doesn't need anything. It's just going to be the same old thing. *Make sure you do your work properly, don't behave in a way that will bring shame to the Yase family demon masters, why don't you call every once in a while.* Jeez, even though he can't even see a single demon he just keeps running his mouth. Outsiders should keep quiet.”

Tokimori laughed bitterly when Yato mimicked his grandfather's way of speaking halfway through his speech. Yato hated Tokimori's family. *Your grandfather is a nag, your grandmother is strict, your father is distant, and even though your mother has a kind voice, she's the scariest of them all.* Tokimori had heard those complaints since he was five years old, so it was obvious he would never come to like them.

“Tokimori, your hair is wet. What will you do if you catch a cold?”

Yato said like a meddlesome mother. He suddenly jumped and grabbed a towel. He climbed onto Tokimori's shoulder and diligently dried his hair.

“Look, all done. Next, I'll blow dry it for you.”

“I'll do it myself. Thanks, Yato.”

His cellphone started ringing when he said his thanks. The screen of course displayed “home”. His grandfather was unable to wait for Tokimori to call back. He had an impatient personality like that. Tokimori sat up straight, mentally prepared himself, and pushed the receive call button.

“Hello, this is Tokimori.”

“Good morning, Tokimori. I called you a little earlier, but you didn’t pick up. Don’t tell me you were sleeping.”

“Good morning, grandfather. I’m sorry I couldn’t pick up. I was in the middle of showering. I just came out of the bathroom now.”

“I see. Did you make sure to do your job properly?”

Since his grandfather said the exact words Yato had mimicked earlier, Tokimori suddenly felt like laughing, but bit down on the inside of his cheeks. Actually, that seemed to be the point of his grandfather’s call. Ignoring Tokimori’s own circumstances, he earnestly wanted to ask about his job as a demon master, and wanted to know how he used Yato.

“I’ve said this several times before, but I cannot talk about the details of the job even to family members. The rule forbidding telling others about our work was set by the head of the family after all.”

Five minutes, then ten minutes went by. He spent time he didn't have trying to politely dodge his questions. If he didn't get ready soon, he wouldn't make it in time to his lectures at the University. When he inhaled to cut off their pointless conversation, his grandfather spoke.

"By the way, how big has Yato gotten?"

"Around 40cm."

Tokimori answered curtly. Yato's ears twitched as he climbed on top of Tokimori's knees. Even though he was far from the phone, his demon ears heard all of their conversation.

"He hasn't grown very much, has he? You can't rely on a small demon to do major jobs. You can't make Yato get bigger faster?"

Yato scrunched up his nose at his grandfather's words, and pouted.

"Yato has been more than useful to me the way he is now."

"If he got bigger, he'd probably be more useful. Is Yato growing slowly because you're not rewarding him enough? I don't know what you two have arranged as a reward, but I heard if you ask the head of the family they will arrange whatever and however much you want. If it's something difficult for you to ask for, I could talk to....."

"Grandfather."

Tokimori gripped the phone as if he were going to crush it as he interrupted his grandfather's speech.

"Yato and I are satisfied with our current arrangement, there are no problems with the rewards. Besides, if someone other than a demon master negotiates with the head of the family, they would be severely punished, right? Please, don't worry about us."

"But, as the family's youngest demon master, we have high expectations for you....."

"I'm sorry, it's getting close to the time I go to university, so excuse me."

Once Tokimori forcefully interrupted him and ended the phone call, Yato immediately started to speak.

"What expectations, the nerve of that guy. He's seriously such an obstinate old man. No matter how many times you remind him not to concern himself with us, or don't interfere, he doesn't get it at all. Want me to dish out some sort of harsh punishment?"

"Don't. You absolutely cannot harm humans. You promised right?"

When he spoke with a firm tone, Yato begrudgingly nodded.

"Yeah. Only Tokimori is important to me. If you tell me revenge is forbidden, then I won't lay a hand on anyone, no matter how angry I get. I'm your demon, Tokimori, so I will only listen to you."

“Thank you.”

Tokimori ruffled Yato's hair with deep affection. Yato's heart overflowed with loyalty toward him. This small, stern demon would never forgive anyone who would harm Tokimori. Unable to live a normal life because he could see demons, Tokimori was an eccentric child who kept his distance from others, and was picked on often. He would cry because he was afraid of the grotesque forms of the demons, he would cry due to the crushing pressure of his family telling him he would be a great demon master, he would cry when he was picked on at school. Doing nothing but crying every day, every time Tokimori was hurt, Yato would get enraged and avenge him. He would mix sugar into all the food, or stick bugs in their clothes and other childish pranks. Tokimori honestly thought, *serves them right!* He was thankful to Yato who would get revenge for his weak self. However, when he was responsible for major injuries by pushing people down from the top of the stairs, or pushing them in front of a running car, and they had to go to the hospital, he got scared. He was able to easily harm humans for Tokimori's sake, and couldn't care less even if they died from their own misfortune. That cruel thought surprised and frightened him. No matter how close they became, no matter how loyal he was to Tokimori, no matter how much he smiled with an innocent face that wouldn't hurt a fly in front of Tokimori, Yato's true nature was nothing but a demon. He was unable to understand the reason for Tokimori's fear.

He had desperately stopped Yato, telling him he didn't need to avenge him anymore, but the angry demon didn't get it. It wasn't until the heads of the family had come out to do an external investigation of the situation that he finally stopped. The heads of the Yase family that consisted of numerous demon masters who possessed demons for the past thousand years, acquired countless treasures and mystical medicines connected to demons. If they got out of hand, and the demon master was unable to control his demon servant, several demon masters could come together and perform an inherited technique to seal them into an orb called the "Demon Sealing Orb". A "Demon Sealing Orb" with a demon in it was heavily guarded in an old mansion in Kyoto that no one was allowed to enter. They were not to be released until they received permission from the master of the head household. Even Yato had been threatened with being sealed into the orb if he had gone even further.

I'd just break the orb and escape, Yato bragged.

However, as expected, he also probably thought it would have been awful. He promised to never disobey Tokimori's orders.

His family did nothing about Tokimori's problem with bullying. His grandparents and even his parents had been married as distant relatives within the Yase bloodline. They all felt as though they were the elite, so they seemed to be jealous of Tokimori's special status as a demon master, and figured his isolation was unavoidable. Even now as

a college student, Tokimori's eccentricities were going strong and would get him caught up in teasing, but he was learning to deal with it, and it wasn't a serious problem. Even though the world outside of his home was less than ideal, he could relax. He couldn't do that in his own home. He left home and lived alone, but his family still manipulated him. However, that was only until he graduated college. He had planned with Yato to secretly move away without telling anyone his new address or phone number after he graduated.

"Aah, time needs to go by faster....."

Tokimori grumbled as he fell into bed face up. Yato immediately sprawled out on top of Tokimori's stomach. It was sweet, like a cat displeased with its owner for not cuddling with it.

"There's about a year and eight months left until you graduate, huh. We'll have to hold back until then. Me, and you too, Tokimori."

"Yeah. Where should we go? We should probably leave Tokyo, huh."

"First, let's go around the whole country. In summer we'll go to Hokkaido, in winter we'll go somewhere with an onsen. We'll travel a lot then settle down in the most comfortable place. A place where we could be lovey-dovey without being seen."

“We would have to be hundreds of meters away from our neighbors for that. All I can think of is an isolated shack in the mountains. I’m okay with that, but it would be pretty lonely, and the head household may disapprove.”

“Tch.”

Yato clicked his tongue.

“They keep running their mouths. Those rules from the head household are such a pain.”

“They help sometimes too, so it can’t be helped.”

Tokimori twirled Yato’s hair around his index finger and played with it. His job as a demon master paid well, and since Tokimori had been working since he was fifteen, he had more than enough income and savings. He could cover the costs of his university tuition, his apartment’s rent, and his living expenses all on his own. Even his home was as large as a two bedroom apartment with a dining and living room despite being a one room apartment, and the rent reflected that, but he had no problems paying it. Having a good command of his job as a demon master, the responsibilities and duties assigned to him were completed successfully and he was rewarded generously.

The Yase family had been using demons since ancient times, and made the impossible possible.

They would take on all sorts of jobs, assassination being the most extreme. Rewarding their demon servants with human flesh was inhumane, but that didn't mean they were a reckless group of assassins by any means. The majority of people the Yase family took consultations with, and submitted requests were people like the leaders of state, financial institutions, and legal circles, in other words, people with the power to move the world. If they could pay, they would take on anyone's request, but that didn't mean they recklessly took on any job. The Yase family had rules and a duty to use the power of demons for the good of the country and mankind. Being buried in history, the blood relatives of the Yase family and their contributions to the country and its people went unrecognized, but little by little people came to know the achievements of the unknown Yase family. Since that flattered their pride, they started to think they were some sort of special family. Just like Tokimori's family. However, Tokimori was different. It was natural to think the Yase family's achievements throughout history were great, but their exploits had nothing to do with Tokimori. Having their names entered at the bottom of the Yase family, they considered themselves elite even though they had never met their ancestors or even their distant relatives, and considered others nothing more than fools as they looked down on them. Tokimori would probably have to work like this until he died as the Yase family pawn. When he thought about the past ten or so years Tokimori felt somehow numb and hugged Yato tightly in order to shake off his anxiety.



Chapter 2

In his private room at an internet café, Tokimori did nothing but watch movies for eight hours. He wasn't goofing off, he just had moments during his job where he had time to kill. He was interested in the first two, so he was having fun and enjoyed them, but watching movies for eight hours to kill time was getting rough. For now he was just staring blankly at the movie he chose playing on the computer screen on mute. Yato was next door in the private room beside his, keeping an eye out on their next target. Since Yato wasn't around, and the computer was connected to the internet, as a man, Tokimori wanted to dive right into the sea of websites with dirty pictures and videos he could browse for free, but he wasn't allowed. It wasn't because he was in the middle of a job either.

"Hey, Tokimori, you're not sneaking looks at dirty stuff, are you?"

It was because Yato would slip through the dividing wall between them to check in on him. Suddenly popping out of places that humans could never go through meant it was impossible to do anything bad behind Yato's back. Tokimori nodded as he thought that his management of his affairs was way too strict even though he was already twenty-one.

"I'm not looking at anything like that. More importantly, it should be time soon."

“Yeah. This request was for at least six hours, but it’s getting close to eight hours now. I think that’s more than enough.”

“All right, I’ll leave first. Ten minutes later, start to move. Return the target to his original location and release the spell.”

“Got it.”

After Tokimori gave his orders, Yato’s body sunk into the wall as he disappeared. He stopped the movie that was playing halfway through, and exited the private room. Since he had ordered a light meal, he settled the bill then went outside. Exactly ten minutes later a lifeless looking man in his mid-fifties came out from the shop. Behind his shoulder was Yato floating in midair like a ghost that clings to the backs of humans. Putting a few meters distance between them, Tokimori followed after the man and Yato. The man was the target for their current job. Other than a photo given to him beforehand in order to know what he looked like, his name, age and occupation were unknown to Tokimori. The man had planned to go to a certain place eight hours ago, but according to the request Tokimori received, he was to stop him from reaching his destination for at least six hours. It was a demon master’s responsibility to come up with the process for the job, and to order his demon servant to execute it. It wasn’t Tokimori’s job to consider the cause and effect, why he had to stop him or what was going to happen at his destination. Before noon he had tried catching a cab to travel to his destination, but Tokimori commanded Yato to put a spell on him and make him go into that internet café from earlier. Yato

had the power to make humans lose their consciousness and obey his orders. When they returned to the place he had put the spell on him, Yato whispered something into the man's ear. The life returned to the man's eyes as if up until then he had been dreaming. Tokimori could tell he was surprised and confused when he realized the time difference. He took out his cellphone from his pants pocket, but became even more flustered when he noticed the battery had been taken out. Yato had ordered him to take out the battery himself, but he had no memory of anything he did while he was under his spell. His memory from the past eight hours was completely missing.

“Finished, Tokimori. Let's go home.”

Yato returned to Tokimori and sat on his shoulder. As he listened to the man put the battery back in his cell phone and call someone screaming, Tokimori turned away.

All of the job requests were submitted to the main household's front desk where the details were investigated. Once it was undertaken, the particulars of the requests are assigned appropriately to a demon master. Usually a request came once or twice a week via an agent, but a demon master never had contact with the requester. Since Tokimori could only command a small demon like Yato, he was in a lower ranking within the other demon masters. When jobs were passed around he only received the simple jobs. Among all the jobs he had done, requests for lost things were the most common, but he had also

done ones like sneaking peeks at documents before their official announcements, or taking photos at the location of a secret rendezvous as proof. After a job like this one his chest ached with guilt. He was told that the jobs the Yase family had the demon masters do were all ethical deeds done for the sake of the people and the world. In other words, that man must have been a bad person, so by confining him they stopped whatever he was planning and saved a large amount of people. He didn't need to feel responsible for ruining a bad person's life. The jobs demon masters took on were all good deeds. Even if he tried to convince himself what he had learned was right, he didn't enjoy watching someone lose eight hours of their memories they would never be able to get back, or the shock and disgrace they received as they made a scene in their panicked state. However, no matter how much he felt bad there was nothing he could do. Tokimori didn't have the right to refuse jobs.

“Thanks for all your hard work.”

Tokimori changed his mood then haggled with Yato.

“Yeah. It was a long one this time. So I want a longer reward. Kisses with Tokimori! Kisses with Tokimori! I'm going to lick and suck you 'cause we're madly in love.”

Considering that only Tokimori could hear him, Yato cheerfully yelled out “kisses” in a loud voice.

“.....”

Even though they were in the middle of pedestrian traffic he used one hand to hold back his forehead.

“Let’s hurry up and kiss! Aah, your smell, Tokimori.....I can’t get enough of it.”

Even though he was a 40 centimeter small demon, he stuck the tip of his nose into Tokimori’s hair and smelled it with deep breaths like a creepy old man.

“Hey, Yato! Stop acting like a pervert and control yourself until we get home.”

Tokimori chided him quietly then moved the hand holding back his forehead to his lips, devoting himself to guarding them from Yato. As he calmly brushed aside Yato who was following closely, he rode the train, got off at his neighborhood station, and quickly headed to his apartment. Somehow he made it to his door, but as soon as he unlocked the entrance way and went inside, Yato attacked him fervently.

“No one can see us anymore! Let’s kiss, Tokimori!”

“Mmph, wa.....wai.....”

With Yato still attached to his face, Tokimori took fumbling steps until he fell face up on the bed. Since it was a reasonable reward for his hard

working demon servant, he wouldn't refuse. Yato's small tongue licked Tokimori's lips and even explored the inside of his mouth. He brushed it against his teeth, poked at his withdrawn tongue, and sucked up his saliva as if he were savoring it.

"Haa.....Tokimori, delicious. Stick your tongue out more."

When Tokimori stuck out his tongue from between his lips, Yato instantly started to suck on it. He opened his eyes slightly to watch him sucking noisily. Seeing Yato's face completely focused on his task, he always wondered if it was *that* delicious. Even though doing this gave him enough nourishment to make his body grow larger little by little, Tokimori wasn't worried. He didn't want Yato to get bigger, but since he would feel guilty rewarding him with something that wouldn't give him any nourishment, he hoped this sort of thing would benefit Yato even just a little in some way. Yato savored Tokimori's lips for nearly an hour without losing interest before finally pulling away.

"Pwah.....! Aah, that was delicious. Super delicious! The best. First-rate. Astounding!"

"Yeah, that's good then."

Tokimori stroked Yato's head who was spouting words with similar meanings one after another. The small demon's kisses left Tokimori's lips and tongue red and swollen to the point of painful. Tokimori tried to get up before he could plead for more than that, but Yato laid flat on

top of his chest to stop him. He grimaced when his chest was stroked through his light t-shirt by lewd hands.

“Yato, get off. Your reward is over.”

“Hey, Tokimori. I want to suck your nipples, just a little is fine.”

“No.”

Tokimori tried to grab the back of his hair to tear Yato off of him, but he wouldn't budge an inch. He only felt the weight of his 40 centimeter body on top of him, but it was like he weighed 100 kilograms just then.

“Just a little. Just licking them a little is fine, right?”

“No.....n-nipples weren't apart of the reward.”

“But, I want them. I want to suck on Tokimori's nipples. From the bottom of my heart. Really badly. With all my being.”

“I said no!”

“Let me suck them.Tokimori, lift up your shirt to your neck, and expose your nipples to me.”

Yato ordered him in a sweet voice as he looked down at him with a forceful gaze. He had the demon voice of seduction. If he were a normal human, he would lose his own free will and do as he was commanded when whispered to like that.

“I’m not going to.”

Tokimori immediately replied, glaring at him. Demon masters had a special attribute they were born with that allowed them to resist the pull of a demon’s voice of seduction. They stood in a position to employ demons for that reason. Even though he knew it wasn’t effective on Tokimori, Yato would try it on him every once in a while just in case. However, even if he was defeated, he never lost heart.

“No good, huh. Thought so. But, I won’t give up.....I’ll just do this!”

“Huh, Yato, hey.....! Stop it, jeez!”

Yato kept moving around to push up the resisting Tokimori’s shirt then suddenly covered one of his intended goals.

“Ha.....”

He unintentionally let out his voice when he felt something warm and wet affix itself to his skin. Tokimori couldn’t understand what was so great about licking a man’s nipples. All he could do was accept that it was what Yato wanted. Yato’s tongue moved continuously, making his soft nipple progressively harden to a point. The feeling tickled, but when he sucked on them harder and lightly brushed against the tip of his nipple, pleasurable sensations ran down his spine.

“Nn.....”

Tokimori let out a small gasp. This was different from a baby wanting his mother's breast. He moved restlessly when Yato's tongue, teeth and lips savored his nipple. Before the faint pleasure wafting around him could connect to his reacting lower half, Tokimori grasped Yato's head with both hands and tore him off. Yato tried to escape his grasp as he pouted unsatisfied.

"I haven't licked this one yet. It won't be fair to you if I don't suck both."

"It's all right. I won't complain. Today's reward is over now. Okay?"

"If I see an opening I'm definitely going to lick the right one."

"Then you must want the silent treatment that badly, huh?"

".....got it, I won't suck them anymore."

Yato reluctantly gave up trying to suck his nipples at Tokimori's threat and obediently climbed down from on top of him. Whenever Yato wouldn't listen to what he said, Tokimori would threaten him with the silent treatment. He would punish Yato by ignoring him when they went out. He wouldn't speak to him, look at him, or even react to Yato's passes. As soon as Tokimori did that sort of thing to him, Yato who loved him so, would get thoroughly upset and throw a fit. He'd ignore his tantrums that could last for at least thirty minutes until he would cling to Tokimori, lifeless like a dying fish, and apologize in a weak voice. Since forgiving him right away would make his punishment lose its effect, he would ignore him for a few more hours, then eventually

accept his apology. This was the usual flow of things until the next instance. Yato's pitifully depressed apologies pulled at his heart strings and made him want to forgive him right away, but he resisted. Therefore the silent treatment hurt them both.

Tokimori sat up and fixed his disheveled clothes. It was obvious even through his t-shirt that only the one nipple Yato sucked on was erect. The way Yato's gaze was fixed on it made him want to cover it with his hand. A *man* wanting to cover up his nipples, seriously, what was the world coming to? The way Yato was attached to them made him feel as though he had a woman's chest.

When he looked up, he suddenly spotted the calendar on the wall with a day circled in red for something that he remembered was coming up in a week. Tokimori let out an annoyed sigh.

“What.....ooh, the Summer Solstice Gathering.”

Yato seemed to immediately recall the reason for his sigh. With an agitated face he sighed even deeper than Tokimori.

The Summer Solstice Gathering was when all the Yase family demon masters, scattered all over the country, assemble at the main house in Tokyo to report their current statuses. As the name suggested, it was held once a year on the day of the summer solstice. Tokimori had participated five times before in the past. It was where they spoke of their contributions to society as Yase family demon masters who

carried the future of Japan on their shoulders, but since Tokimori sat quietly at the lowest ranked seat, he rarely opened his mouth. No matter what sort of politics that should have been in place were established, this event always ended up with complications like people yelling at each other and sending out their demon servants to fight, the others getting angry and walking out halfway through.

“I don’t want to go. I want to pretend I’m sick and take a day off. It won’t matter if I’m not there, only the heads, or the high-ranked guys, or the people who actually want to go should go.”

Yato agreed with Tokimori’s complaints.

“I don’t want to go either. Who the hell decided on a summer solstice meeting anyway? What an annoying guy.”

“I assume it was the head of the household sixty-nine years ago. Since this year is the sixty-ninth Summer Solstice Gathering.”

“Considering the Yase family’s history of over a thousand years, that’s pretty recent.”

The reason being, sixty-nine years ago, in other words after the chaos of World War II, the head of the main household took leadership and now manages the demon masters all over the country. Tokimori hugged Yato who was sitting on his knees as he remembered the origins of the Yase family. The founder of the Yase family was an onmyouji named Hidetou Yase from the early Heian period who impregnated a

female demon that gave birth to a half-human, half-demon child named Hidemori. The female demon's name was Fuyou. As her name suggested, her unequaled beauty that could be compared to a celestial maiden appeared to human eyes as nothing more than Hidetou's powerful and intelligent wife that lived with him in his mansion. No one knew her true form. Since there were no documents remaining about Fuyou's relatives, the particulars of her life other than her name and looks were unknown. Inheriting both his mother's good looks and demon blood, Hidemori was able to see things like demons, apparitions, and spirits. He was also able to visit the *Intersection of the Six Realms*, the world where demons lived between the human world and hell. He could also employ demons as his servants. On the borders between the human world, and the Intersection of the Six Realms were walls that the residents could not pass. There were demons existing in the human world, and beings in the human world that could transform into demons that were small enough to crawl through the thin cracks of the wall, or large enough to cross over the wall as if there was nothing even there. Since Hidemori had the blood of both worlds, it was natural he could come and go through both as he pleased. The demons that were unable to leave the Intersection of the Six Realms were able to go to the human world by making contracts of servitude with Hidemori. While his blood was mixed with that of a demon's, Hidemori's body was no different from a human. He could be injured, and fall ill. He just had a mysterious attraction that fascinated demons. Demons wanted to serve him, refusing seemed to be even more troublesome. Even though a

demon's favorite food was human flesh, all of Hidemori's demon servants listened to his commands without bringing harm to virtuous humans, and wanted to be useful to him, almost to the point of fighting each other to do so first. On the outside, Hidemori was in the position of an onmyouji, but in actuality he wasn't predisposed to their arts and was unable to perform the techniques necessary for exorcisms. Even so, his official position was that of an onmyouji who could control demons at will in order to quell attacks against the city by strange creatures, as well as protect important people by bestowing their powers on them. Therefore Hidemori, who couldn't be called an onmyouji, went by another name, *demon master*. Hidemori eventually took a human woman as his wife, and his offspring inherited his demon blood. His offspring also weren't predisposed to being onmyouji, so it was decided they would live on as demon masters. The Yase family withdrew from the onmyouji path and settled themselves in the shadows of the government. Even though it wasn't an official position, they were in high demand. For about seven generations, all the children born with Hidemori's blood were demon masters that started to branch out on the family tree, and spread across the country. The Yase clan prospered from the world of the shadows. However, continuous mixing with humans weakened the demon blood which resulted in normal humans being born who could not see demons. The Yase clan was headed toward crisis, so they intermarried over and over again, but was still unsuccessful. Generations passed, but by the end of World War II the number of demon masters decreased dramatically. He had been told

that back in their prime there were over three hundred demon masters, but currently there were only sixty-five. Meaning, Tokimori who had been born in the Heisei era, was an endangered species.

“.....if demon masters continue to not be born, I wonder what will happen to the Yase family.”

Tokimori muttered as he pressed his chin on top of Yato’s head.

“They’ll probably fall apart, right?”

Yato easily replied since he had no emotional attachments to the Yase family. There was no retirement age for a demon master, but they can’t beat old age. The eldest demon master was certainly eighty-three years old, but there were ten of them already in their seventies. Even if a demon master baby was born now, they wouldn’t be able to work until they were fifteen. Unless some miracle occurred, the number of demon masters would continue to decrease from here on out. The Yase family that flourished *because* of their demon masters would cease to exist if they lost them.

“If they fell apart, and my points of contact were gone, I’d lose my job. I’d have to start saving for retirement right now. Since I can’t do any job but demon master, even if I got employed at a regular job, I wouldn’t be very good at it.”

“Don’t worry. Leave it all to me. I definitely won’t let you be poor or destitute. I’ll make sure you’re all right.”

Tokimori's heart fluttered a little at Yato's manliness. No matter what sort of worries Tokimori had, Yato would always drive those worries away.

"Thanks. You're pretty cool for a 40 centimeter small demon."

When Tokimori dropped a kiss on top of his hair, Yato turned around to face him. He held Yato up in a hug as he clung to Tokimori's neck with both arms.

"I'd be cooler if I were bigger. Can I get bigger? How about close to two meters?"

"Absolutely not! You're cute at 40 centimeters."

"Didn't you say I was cool just now?"

"I don't like big demons. You know that, right?"

Yato's golden eyes shining with defiance darkened a bit. Tokimori's hatred of large demons was deeply ingrained. Even if they were small enough to fit in the palm of his hand, he couldn't help being afraid of the grotesque forms of demons. There were only a certain amount of human traits, but the variations of demons were abundant. There were ones close to two meters, or around one centimeter, ones with six eyes, and four arms. Blue and red were popular skin colors, but they were every color imaginable. Having to see those grotesque forms all day and night, Tokimori spent his days crying in fear until he was five. If they

would have just treated him like a fly on the wall, or just passed him by like he was nobody, he could have dealt with it, but all the demons he could see would watch him, so whenever they tried to meet his eyes he'd get even more scared. Without looking away, the demons would face him with a wide smile and tell him they were going to rip him apart with their fangs as they showed him their long sharp fangs. His parents and grandparents who couldn't see demons couldn't understand Tokimori's fear. No matter how many times he explained how strange the physical appearances of demons were, or that they scared him, since they couldn't actually see them, they couldn't understand just how frightened and disgusted he was. He now thought that they may not have wanted to understand. Tokimori had a feeling that was exactly it. That was because a demon master's rank wasn't decided by their age or purity of blood, but by their ability to command demons. A demon master was to make a contract with a powerful demon with no ties to the main household or other branches of the family, so they could assume the position of head of the family to lead the Yase clan down the path to greatness. The Yase family got together to make Tokimori choose a strong demon, since he was the only one who could.

“You’re a demon master. You’re young, and have so much to be proud of, just consider the origin of your name. The Toki in Tokimori is written with the character for the Japanese ibis. Another way to write ibis has the character for peach in it. Peaches have the power to ward off danger. Back in the days of legends, Izanagi no Mikoto used

peaches to throw at demons and evil spirits to drive them away. Momotaro from the fairytales was born from a peach, he then went on to exterminate the demons from the island. Your name as a demon master is written with characters that pray for your safety and to drive out demons, not to be eaten by them. Being scared like that all the time is an insult to your name.”

His nagging grandfather would preach to him like that every day.

“You will become the master of demons, so what do you have to be afraid of? Pull yourself together.”

His grandmother who was stricter than his grandfather scolded Tokimori as he shivered under his bedcovers.

“Don’t cry, Tokimori. I think the demons that approach you just want to get to know you. Why don’t you try becoming friends with the biggest and most powerful demons before you pick one? You can do that, right?”

His mother with her kind smile just made Tokimori even more uneasy.

“Being afraid of demons, just how spoiled are you? You were born to carry the responsibility of being a demon master, I won’t allow my child to be so spoiled. You will eventually have a demon servant to join with you both in body and soul. You will be able to contribute to the prosperity of our clan. Do you know how amazing that is? No matter

how much we want to do that, we cannot, so if we could switch places with you, we would.”

His father’s words were difficult for the young Tokimori to understand, but the way he got on his knees and looked Tokimori straight in the eye made him want to run away. He realized when he got older the reason his father faced him with such a gloomy gaze was because he was jealous.

Yato appeared before Tokimori when he was completely exhausted from fearing demons and being pressured by his family. Tokimori chose Yato. He didn’t regret that choice at all.

“Everyone said I should pick a big and strong demon, but I’m fine with the way you are now, Yato.”

Tokimori stated clearly once again. Yato dropped his gaze as he thought about something, then looked back up, straight at Tokimori.

“But, my body has been growing little by little. Eventually I’ll double in size, so I may reach close to two meters at some point. What are you going to do when that happens?”

While he wondered why he was so fixated with being two meters tall, Tokimori also thought about what he said.

“I can’t really picture you that big. Besides, it would probably take around thirty years for you to get that big, and I would be fifty by then.....hmmm, I wonder what I would do. I’m not really sure.”

“What, you’re planning on abandoning me when I get bigger!?”

“No, I won’t abandon you.”

“Then what!?”

“I’ll think about it then.”

“Think about it now!”

“You’re forty centimeters right now. There’s no point in thinking about it.....”

As soon as he spoke, he received a message on his cellphone.

“Hold on, I got a message.It’s from Katsumoto-san. It says, if you’re done with work, and are home, I’d like to come over. I wonder why.”

Katsumoto Yase was Tokimori’s personal agent.

“Your suit for the Summer Solstice Gathering is probably ready, he must be coming to drop it off.”

Yato casually predicted Katsumoto’s business. If that was Yato’s assertion, then he definitely wouldn’t be wrong. Accepting it without

any doubts, Tokimori fiddled with his cellphone. He reported he had completed his job successfully and that he could come over any time, then pressed send. He got an immediate reply asking if he could come in thirty minutes.

He took a quick shower, and put on a freshly washed and ironed collared blouse with black slacks. He didn't have time to wash his hair, but he arranged it nicely with a comb. In the time specified, the interphone chimed. When he opened the front door, Katsumoto was standing there holding a long flat box with both hands. He knew what was inside the box without having to look.

"Please, come in."

"I apologize for the sudden intrusion. But your suit was ready."

"I'm sorry you had to go out of your way to bring it, thank you. I was planning on picking it up myself though."

"I had business at the shop, so I grabbed it while I was there. Please don't worry about it."

Tokimori accepted the box, took out the suit and hung it up. He had chosen a beautiful and luxurious deep navy fabric at Katsumoto's recommendation while he was getting his measurements taken two months ago. Since it seemed to be customary to wear a brand new order made suit to the annual Summer Solstice Gathering every year,

he always arranged for a full set, from his shirts to his shoes, at the usual Yase family shop.

“Try it on later, if it doesn’t fit anywhere, please tell me. Thank you for all your hard work today. We’re still in the middle of checking the target’s status, but it seems as though your job was completed successfully.”

“Of course it was. Tokimori and I did it. There’s no way we’d fail.”

The one who responded to Katsumoto’s seemingly satisfied words was Yato. He replied to him arrogantly as he floated in front of Katsumoto’s face with both hands on his hips.

“That’s reassuring. We may start leaving some of the slightly bigger jobs to you and Yato-san.”

Surprised by Katsumoto’s statement, Tokimori frantically refused.

“Oh no, not at all! Big jobs would be way too much for Yato and I. I would be so nervous worrying about what would happen if I fail, that I would end up failing. You can increase the amount, but I want to keep doing the small jobs.”

“I think you should challenge yourself so you can step up though.”

“No, I’m okay. Let’s keep things the same. Actually, I’d prefer that.”

“.....you’re the same as usual, Tokimori-san.”

A wry smile came across Katsumoto's bold face. Whenever a demon master child was born somewhere among the Yase clan, the main household dispatched a demon master instructor of their choosing. Of course, they're all members of the Yase family. At first, it was Katsumoto's job as Tokimori's instructor to come to his house once or twice a week to teach him the history of the Yase family that wasn't printed in any textbook, information about demons, and about his jobs and duties as a demon master. Once Tokimori turned fifteen and started working, Katsumoto's status elevated from instructor to agent. He gave him support in various ways. It was him who looked for Tokimori's apartment when he said he wanted to live alone. He knew all about Tokimori's fear of demons and cowardly personality, his weakness when it came to the crushing pressures of his family's expectations, and the emotional support Yato gave him.

With his well-toned body, short and neat deep black hair, no one would have thought he was turning fifty this year. He seemed to understand Tokimori and Yato's conversations, so he had the power to see demons, but he wasn't a demon master. That sort of anomaly seemed to be born into the Yase family every once in a while.

"Since Tokimori doesn't want to, let's maintain the current sort of jobs. More importantly, we're moving. That old man is annoying, so we want to move somewhere no one will find us, somewhere remote where we can live carefree and lovey-dovey. Secretly. After Tokimori graduates is fine, but where do you think we should go?"

Katsumoto looked back and forth between Yato and Tokimori. He thought for a moment before opening his mouth.

“If possible, I would be thankful if you stayed within the Kanto branch. However, if your family’s constant interference is troubling you, I’ll send them a severe warning.”

“No, it’s all right. I think I’ll endure until I graduate from university.”

Tokimori resisted as he smiled wryly.

“There’s no need to endure that sort of thing. There are only a small handful of demon masters born into our clan. You are special. I won’t allow anyone to trouble you, especially a demon master born into the Yase family. They need to know their place. Since you consulted me about a place to live after graduation, I will contact you later about it.”

Katsumoto said with furrowed brows and a frightening smile engraved across his face before he went home.

Once it was just the two of them, Yato let out a short whistle.

“Scary! As usual, that guy is cold to anyone in the clan who’s not a demon master.”

“That’s because demon masters are Katsumoto-san’s top priority.”

“I don’t really like that guy.”

“Well, he’s not someone you want to let your guard down around.”

Tokimori spoke honestly. He could see demons, he was knowledgeable and prudent, and Tokimori could rely on him more than his own family, but that was it. Tokimori didn’t personally value Katsumoto, first because he was from the main household, and second because he had a feeling that as a demon master, he would be stuck with him for a long time. He respected Tokimori as his master, even though their age difference was like father and son, *because* he was a demon master, and would do anything to protect him. However, he was the sort of man that would immediately report to the main household if Tokimori or Yato broke any rules, or did something that wouldn’t benefit the main household, and handle their punishment. The way he was able to obediently act on the orders from the main household without letting his emotions get in the way, he would have made a fine demon master, but he was not born as such.

It is determined whether a child from a demon master blood line would be born with their abilities while they’re still a fetus residing in their mother’s womb. Humans are normally born in nine months, but after two months of pregnancy, if there is little growth of the fetus, and there is a substantial delay in the delivery date, but without labor pains, it is known that the child will be a demon master. On the other hand, a child born with a typical gestation period could not become a demon master after the fact. It seemed impossible for someone like Katsumoto to become a demon master, even though he could see demons. If they

weren't a demon master, they were unable to make contracts with demons, or put them under their command. To demons, humans were considered food, nutrients to amplify their power. Even if a demon were to befriend a human on a whim, when a demon gave into their appetite, that human would be eaten, and it would be over. Since demon masters were humans, they also fell under the category of nutrients, but compared to normal humans, they had special qualities that made them difficult prey. The one who taught him all that was Katsumoto.

A four year old Tokimori was drawing at a small table made for children with Katsumoto. There were crayon drawings of demons in various sizes and colors in his white sketchbook. Tokimori didn't want to draw scary demons, but Katsumoto told him to try drawing them, in a voice he couldn't disobey, so he had no choice but to draw them.

"You draw really well. Since you're a demon master, eventually you will choose a demon to be by your side. Are you afraid of demons, Tokimori-san?"

".....yeah."

"You're right to be afraid. Why are demons scary? It's because they eat us humans. Perhaps because of the pronounced bloodline of demons in demon masters, they recognize them as something closer to a demon, or maybe it's because they are forced to recognize them as their

brethren, you won't suddenly be eaten by them. However, if you fight with a demon, or make them angry, you could be easily eaten."

"They're going to eat m-me? I'm going to be eaten by a demon?"

Tokimori asked completely shocked as he trembled. Bloodline, and brethren were difficult words for him to understand, but he definitely understood the meaning of the word eat. Katsumoto nodded gravely.

"That's right. Demons are hotheaded gluttons. It is said that humans are really delicious to them, their favorite food. Since you're so small, you could be eaten before you know it, Tokimori-san."

"N-No.....no.....! I'm scared!"

"But, that can't be helped, that's just how demons are. You love the sweet taste of peaches, so you eat them, right? It's the same as that."

Imagining the large mouth of a terrifying demon opening and chewing on his head, Tokimori had been unable to eat peaches since then.

Telling a normal child that they would be eaten by demons, or that humans were tasty may have been considered a cruel way to raise them, but Katsumoto constantly taught him about the cruelty of demons and the fragility of humans so he would be raised without finding any of those things strange. More than learning to fear them, it was so a demon master could carve into their heart that demons must never be underestimated at any cost, to be confident in their own power, to go out to the Intersection of the Six Realms where demons lived, find a

demon they were certain of, and offer them a contract. The way to get to the Intersection of the Six Realms, how to find a demon should have been something a demon master knew instinctively when they were born without anyone teaching them, but Tokimori didn't really understand any of it. He didn't need to search for demons, they came to him in swarms. There was always one particular demon that was as tall as the top of his bedroom window that was especially persistent. He would watch Tokimori from outside his window all the time, and when he would go outside, the demon would follow him around like a stalker. Thankfully for Tokimori, the swarms of demons never came inside the house, and whenever he would go outside, they could only come within a certain distance of him. Tokimori's life filled with loneliness and fear, and the unrest he felt day after day because of demons, changed dramatically when he met Yato.

On the morning of Tokimori's fifth birthday, Yato suddenly appeared, sitting quietly on his pillow. Since he was half asleep, and figured demons wouldn't come all the way into the house, he thought he was dreaming at first. However, no matter how many times he blinked, he was there. He seemed to be a small demon. He was about ten centimeters tall, and didn't look all that different from a human. Wrapped around his body was something like tiger striped underpants. There were two short and thin horns just barely coming out from his head. He turned his head toward him as he lay still in bed, his body tensing when he looked at the small demon who spoke to him.

“All right, you finally see me. Tokimori, I am Yato. Your demon. Let’s be friends.”

Tokimori was dumbfounded at the ten centimeter small demon’s words, and couldn’t even reply.

“Hey, can you hear my voice? I’m not like those big and scary demons you hate. As you can see, I’m small and weak. So, get to know me. Can you understand what I’m saying?”

“.....yeah.”

Tokimori finally sat up and answered him. Demons had watched him ever since he was born, but this was the first time he had a conversation with one. The more he looked at the small demon from this close of a distance, the less he could make out his expression.

“Call me Yato.”

“Yato?”

“Yeah!”

He answered full of energy, smiling widely. The white fangs peeking out of his mouth were as puny as his horns. They didn’t look like they would hurt even if they bit him. The stray cat his grandparents would chase out of the garden had much sharper and longer fangs.

“Are you going to eat me, Yato?”

Due to Katsumoto's special lessons, and the encouragement of his usual cowardly and cautious personality, that was the most important thing Tokimori wanted to confirm for now.

"I'm not going to eat you."

"Really? You won't eat anyone else either?"

"Yeah, I won't eat you or anyone else."

"Can you pinky swear?"

"I can."

Yato held out his arm toward Tokimori and offered his pinky.

"I pinky swear, if I lie, I'll swallow a thousand needles."

Unable to actually hook their pinkies together, they both held out their pinkies and recited the pinky swear together. Tokimori finally relaxed. Ever since that day, Yato would always sit on Tokimori's shoulder. He would also stay in his pockets, or grab onto his hair and ride on top of his head. No one in his family noticed Yato was there. As usual, they would selfishly lecture and encourage him not to fail their expectations. At those times, Tokimori could do nothing but cry, but thanks to Yato, the amount he cried decreased dramatically. Any time his family would say something to Tokimori, Yato would object with terrible force, and shout nonsense into his ear so he couldn't catch his family's words. His family mistook Tokimori crying less because of Yato as becoming

stronger, so they were overjoyed, which resulted in less lectures.

Katsumoto of course noticed Yato. The first time Yato and Katsumoto came face to face, they stared at each other in silence for at least thirty seconds. They both seemed to be sizing each other up. Yato was the first to open his mouth.

“Yo! You seem to be able to see me. I’m Tokimori’s demon. Nice to meet ya.”

“.....I am Katsumoto Yase, Tokimori-san’s instructor. Pleased to make your acquaintance.”

Katsumoto spoke formally, despite Yato’s excessively arrogant tone.

“Tokimori, you can tell Katsumoto my name.”

“.....huh, okay. This little one is Yato.”

Tokimori told Katsumoto Yato’s name while thinking he could have done it himself. He didn’t know yet that demons were unable to freely give their name to anyone other than their established master.

“Thank you for telling me his name.”

Katsumoto thanked Tokimori courteously. It may have been right to thank Tokimori since he was the one who told him, however, it was like he was talking to him, but not. It was a strange exchange.

Tokimori exchanged an official contract with Yato when he was eight years old. Yato had been pestering him to hurry, but Tokimori also felt as though he wanted no one other than Yato as his servant demon. His family threw a fit for choosing a small demon, but Katsumoto didn't refuse, and immediately informed the main household of Tokimori's wishes, which was promptly approved.

The official contract ceremony was held in the old mansion in Kyoto where the Yase family's ancestor, Hidemori, had once lived. During the middle of the Edo period, the main household expanded into Edo, and presently resided in a large estate near Tokyo, but the old mansion was used during the official contract ritual. Since no one other than demon masters were allowed to attend, Katsumoto escorted him to the old mansion without any other family. He wasn't a demon master either, so all he could do was drop him off and pick him up. The ones who received Tokimori at the old mansion were the three demon masters in charge of preparing and overseeing the ceremony. There was a man in his forties, a woman in her thirties, and an eighteen year old young man, who before Tokimori was born, was the youngest demon master. The man in his forties introduced himself as Fujitsugu Yase, the woman as Kiwa Yase, and the young man as Takakage Yase. They were the first demon masters other than himself Tokimori had ever met.

"Good afternoon, Tokimori-kun. Starting today, you will be joining us demon masters. Normally, it is customary for the head of the household, Masanori-sama, to witness the ceremony, but he had an

urgent job, and was unable to attend at this time. I heard he will be holding an audience with you in Tokyo at a later date.”

Fujitsugu said to Tokimori who was standing as still as a statue without a word in his extreme nervousness.

“Don’t be so tense. My son is the same age as you, Tokimori-kun. Unfortunately, he’s not a demon master though. This is the first time I’ve heard of an eight year old coming here. Normally, people make their contracts at thirteen or fourteen before they start working. You must get along really well with your demon.”

Kiwa gently stroked Tokimori’s head as if he were her own child.

“Yo, shorty. I’m glad to finally have someone beneath me. Since I belong to the Kyushu branch, we probably won’t be able to meet much, but since we’re both youngin’s, let’s be friends. Nice to meet you.”

Takakage who just became a first year university student, smiled with the face of a good-natured older brother. Fujitsugu explained the gist of the ceremony to him, while Kiwa prepared his meals, and helped him change into the ceremonial kimono. Takakage had settled his own contract there four years ago. Since his memory of the ceremony was most fresh, he told Tokimori about his own experience, and eased his tension. During that time, Yato sat on Tokimori’s shoulder, sticking close to him, and keeping so quiet it was like all that talking he would normally do was lie. Even though these demon masters should have

been able to see Yato, no one asked Tokimori about him at all. A demon master who already made a contract with a demon servant would by no means show any interest in another demon. Demon masters talking about their demons was taboo. The reason was because their own demon servant would get jealous. Whether they were passive, or belligerent, demons each had their own personality, but most demons were immensely possessive, and insanely jealous. If a demon master showed any interest in a demon other than the one contracted to him, they would get violent to show just how possessive they were. If a fight to the death between demons broke out, demon servants have been known to kill their own demon masters and eat them. By doing so, they would literally become one body and soul. The best way to avoid being joined in death to a jealous demon was by pretending not to see anyone else.

The ceremony was held the night of the new moon. They utilized a round area of earth around five meters in circumference within the old mansion's garden. He was told that the so called "demon summoning plot" was collaboratively built by Hidemori's parents, the onmyouji Hidetou and the female demon Fuyou. It seemed to have the purpose of being a path and doorway between the human world and the Intersection of the Six Realms that demon servants could use to come and go as they please.

Finally the sun set, and it became night. With only one burning bonfire faintly illuminating the darkness, Tokimori stood alone in the middle of

the demon summoning plot wearing a white kimono under the supervision of the other demon masters. Although mostly faded over the thousands of years, there were Sanskrit-like symbols around and inside of the plot. Separated before the ceremony started, Yato was awaiting orders in the Intersection of the Six Realms.

“I-I, Tokimori Yase, command you. Yato, come.....come forth.”

With clumsy movements, he joined the summoning seals like he was taught, and stumbled over the words he wasn't used to saying to call Yato. With an adorable 'thunk' sound, the center of the plot swelled, and Yato pushed his way through the dirt to climb out. It was now possible to call Yato from wherever Tokimori was by opening personal paths for him. Yato stopped Tokimori from crouching down, swiftly floated up to his face, and held out his bare arm. Tokimori grasped the hilt of a short sword between his obi with shaky hands, and pulled it out from its scabbard. The name of the short sword loaned to him for the contract ritual was *Chiyomaru*, the Thousand Generation Blade. Also called the Blood Bestowing Blade, it was a special sword that was able draw blood from demons that could not be cut by normal blades. It was a short sword, but to Tokimori who was a child, it was big and heavy. He was afraid to cut Yato's arm that was no wider than his own pinky with it. If he applied the wrong amount of pressure, he could seriously injure him. Perhaps sensing he couldn't leave it to Tokimori, Yato grazed his own arm against Chiyomaru's blade. A line smoothly ran across his arm, and red blood flowed. Yato pressed the opening of

the wound against the shocked Tokimori's mouth. He immediately tried to turn his face away, but he remembered what he was supposed to do. He hesitantly stuck his tongue out and licked the blood.

"Suck on it more. Don't let it spill."

He heard Yato's faint voice that was like sigh. He sucked on the wound like he was told, and a large amount of blood that he couldn't imagine coming from someone Yato's size filled his mouth. Resisting the urge to gag, Tokimori shut his eyes tight, and drank it down little by little. Yato's blood was smooth, sweet, and could actually be classified as tasty, but the act of drinking blood physiologically disgusted him.

"That's enough."

Yato told him. Tokimori took his mouth away from Yato's arm. The back of his throat and the pit of his stomach were hot. *Badump*, his heart beat loudly, and a heat like sparks ran through his whole body. His head hurt, he felt nauseous, but he desperately endured. Demon masters take in the blood of a demon accepting their summons as a way for them to connect to their demon servants. Contracted demons found in the Intersection of the Six Realms weren't actually allowed to go to the human world, and could only be summoned for jobs. Once they were no longer being employed, they were sent back to the Intersection of the Six Realms.



Once summoned, a demon servant will come out from the summoning plot into the human world, then relying on the presence of their own blood, he will search for his master and arrive in no time. Since Yato was a demon that was originally in the human world, Tokimori kept him by his side day and night. He didn't need to use the demon summoning plot, so it was possible to be bound by contract without the ceremony, but the Yase family considered it an illicit union and would not officially accept it. A demon must obey the demon master he bestowed his blood to as their personal servant unless their master dies, or dissolves the contract themselves. A contracted demon also was unable to take on another demon master. Tokimori belonged to Yato. Yato belonged to Tokimori. It was just something they had promised each other verbally, but now it was an official contract, and all the demon masters were notified.

His nausea finally died down. Tokimori wiped his mouth with the back of his hand, he then realized he was still gripping Chiyomaru's handle in his hand. There wasn't a single drop of blood clinging to the blade. He glanced at Yato's arm, expecting blood, but there wasn't even a mark left behind.

"A demon's injury will heal immediately. It doesn't hurt either. Well then, see you later."

Yato said in a voice only Tokimori could hear, then sank back down feet first into the earth he came out from until he could no longer be seen. Tokimori sheathed Chiyomaru back into its scabbard, and exited the

summoning plot. The ceremony was now over. He stayed the night at the old mansion. The next morning he gave his thanks to the three that supervised him, then Katsumoto escorted him back home. When he asked if anything had changed after the contract exchange, he wasn't really sure.

Due to the after-effects of the contract, the day after the ceremony he became carelessly and excessively belligerent. He would get angry at his family with their expectations, and argued with them vehemently. He would start fights with demons that annoyed him by staring at him from the shadows, but after three days he calmed down, and went back to his normal, quiet self.

The Intersection of the Six Realms was an unknown world to Tokimori.

“What sort of place is the Intersection of the Six Realms? Were you born there, Yato? What do demons usually do there? How do they live?”

Curious, he decided to ask, but Yato who normally spoke with such authority, made an immensely troubled face as he reluctantly squeezed out his words.

“.....it's survival of the fittest.”

“Sorry, Yato. I won't ask about it ever again!”

Realizing he stepped into territory he probably shouldn't have, Tokimori immediately apologized. He always seemed to have an

arrogant attitude to Tokimori, but living in a world like that must have been hard for a small and weak demon like Yato. He may have barely been able to escape with his life through a gap in the border to the human world where he then found Tokimori. He decided he would never send Yato back to such a cruel world, and Tokimori would never ever go there himself. Even though demon masters wanted strong demon servants, Tokimori preferred his small, powerless demon, and even though demons wanted to eat humans to become stronger, Yato didn't want either of those things. Considering the Yase family history, Tokimori and Yato were an unusual demon master and demon servant, but they were satisfied with the way things currently were.